

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chair
The Honorable James Walsh
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS, Education
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS, Education
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As you work to finalize the fiscal year 2009 appropriations bill for the President's signature, we want to draw your attention to the new Model Programs for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success that have been authorized in the Higher Education Opportunity Act that was signed by President Bush on August 14, 2008. This program, while not large in a budgetary sense, could have a significant impact on veterans being able to realize the full benefit of our expansion of the GI bill. We urge you to include \$10 million in the fiscal year 2009 appropriations bill for this program.

The Model Programs for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success will provide resources for campuses to establish a one-stop support system on campus to help veterans succeed in college and graduate. Veterans and active duty service members returning from war need additional support to be successful in post-secondary education. Many veterans face financial, academic, and social barriers to successfully completing postsecondary education. Coordinating veterans' health and education benefits with student financial aid is often challenging, resulting in some veterans forgoing benefits they have earned in the field of duty. Campuses are struggling to support veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, many of whom are suffering mental and physical health challenges from their service in a war zone.

These model programs will support veteran students on campus by coordinating services to address the academic, financial, physical and social needs of veteran students so that they successfully enroll, persist, and complete postsecondary education programs. Campuses receiving funds will form veteran students support teams that include representatives from the financial aid office, the veterans' benefits office, student health, academic advising, disabilities services, career advising, and other campus office that provides support for veteran students.

With an investment of \$10 million, up to 40 college campuses could put in place centers for veteran student success, making the transition to college for our veterans smooth and successful.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact Moira Lenehan-Razzuri in Rep. Hinojosa's office at 5-2531 or Jessica Gross in Rep. Castle's office at 5-4165 if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Rubén Hinojosa, M.C.



Bart Gordon, M.C.



Dennis Moore, M.C.



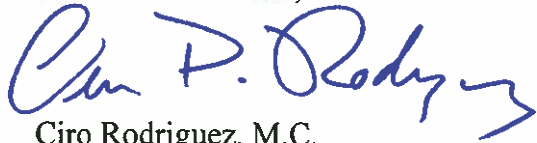
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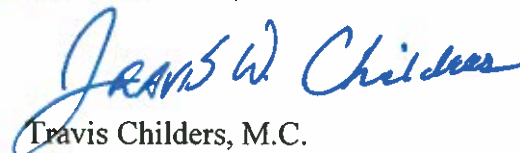
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Travis Childers, M.C.



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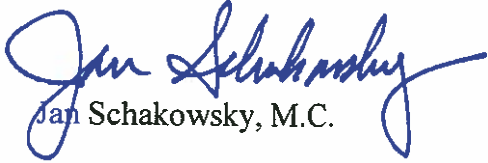
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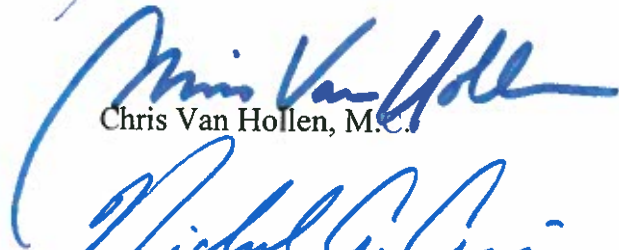
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